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The Fivefold Field of The Congregational Home Missionary Society

By

LAURA KINSLOE

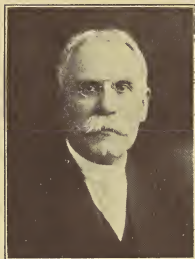
The Congregational Home Missionary Society
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The Fivefold Field of the C. H. M. S.

THE activities of The Congregational Home Missionary Society are administered under five departments—Frontier, Rural, City, Immigrant, and the Negro Work in the North. Each of these departments has its own problems to solve and its peculiar difficulties to overcome. But the earnestness and devotion of the men and women who are trying to solve and overcome them is such that there can be no doubt as to ultimate success. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to present, briefly, some of these problems, show what has been done, what is being done, and what remains to be done.

I. The Frontier

“How shall they preach except they be sent.”

IN a missionary sense the word “frontier” acquires a new meaning every ten years. At the beginning of the home missionary century, 1826, the word applied to New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Gradually, however, the country designated “frontier” retreated toward the setting sun until it came to mean the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, portions of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Arizona and New Mexico. In these states there is a steadily increasing population, and in them Congregationalism, through the Home Missionary Society, is laying the foundations for future centers of influence. But if the share of

the denomination in this tremendous task is to be borne adequately, a large expenditure of money is necessary. At present it is not possible to have workers even at all the strategic points. The need is evident. In the majority of these frontier settlements the Congregational is often the only English-speaking church, and if such churches are not established when the people want them, or if they are withdrawn because of lack of money, the children in large sections of the country will be without religious instruction in the language of their country, or, in many cases, in any language at all. In isolated regions, also, the church is usually the only means of social contact between people who otherwise would not meet their nearest neighbors once a month. All social life centers about the church and the church work. Often these mission stations must be aided for a number of years, but they are worth aiding. They help to lift the interest of the community out of the rut of materialism. They plant the seeds of spiritual growth in the hearts of the children, who, growing up, go out from them to benefit and bless the world. Plant a Christian church in any community and it becomes at once the nucleus of law, order, moral living, and civic virtue.

Some famous names among Congregational frontier missionaries are: the members of the Iowa Band, which went out from Andover in 1843; Samuel J. Willey, who began work in California in 1849; Joseph Rickett, who planted churches in Colorado in the 70's; Reuben Gaylord, who went to the Nebraska frontier in 1855; Cushing Eels, whose

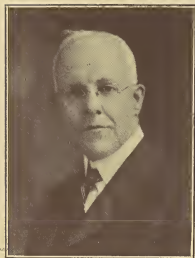
life was interwoven with the early history of Washington and Oregon; Marcus Whitman, who gave his life for the Indians in that region; and Joseph Ward, who, as missionary and college president, helped lay the foundations in the Dakotas.

The great majority of frontier missionaries have tasks that are complicated and difficult—tasks that require the utmost devotion to the work before there can be any possibility of success. Great distances must be covered in the performance of pastoral duties. Frequently one missionary holds services at four or five different points, and without an automobile it is not possible for him to do the work for which he was commissioned and to which he must give his best efforts. In recent years the Society and its friends have provided, so far as possible, cars for the larger parishes, but the supply never equals the need.

These men are helping new communities to build themselves up on a foundation of Christian faith; they are laboring to fashion righteous commonwealths for the welfare of the nation and the world. They also face the immigrant problem, for a very large proportion of the population of these frontier stations is foreign. It is probable that the men who were first responsible for church organization in these outposts of the people believed that the day must surely come when home mission work would not be needed. That idea no longer exists. Our obligations, so far as the disappearance of the frontier is concerned, will not be lessened for many years to come.

II. The Rural Field

"The field is ripe unto the harvest."



MALCOLM DANA, D.D.

WITH the migration to the West and to the large cities many village and country churches which up to that time had been self-supporting found it impossible to carry on their work without assistance. Here was a new home missionary field in old territory. It was rightly remembered that the country church had been the nurturing place for strong character and that the denomination owed to

the people who were left and to the children who were being reared in the country districts an opportunity for right development. Efforts in this direction were not spared, so far as finances would permit.

About 1905 this enlarging field made it evident that the whole problem, both in old territory and new, was one which demanded the entire time of a Secretary, but it was not until July, 1919, that the Department of Rural Work was opened and Rev. Malcolm Dana, D.D., chosen as its Director. He has followed the plan of answering calls to

certain outstanding fields and giving to them sufficient time to start them on the road to success. The aim is to socialize and Christianize entire districts. Collbran, Colorado, is a notable achievement in this direction. Activities center in a well-equipped community house in the town itself, while outlying points in several directions are reached by means of a "Service Car." Vacation schools are conducted in the summer, and moving-picture entertainments, with community sings, bring the people together in schoolhouses and in the homes. Thus the church is leading the people in a program which has enriched the entire valley in which Collbran is located. Other points where community work is in progress are: Star, North Carolina; Montrose, Colorado; Edgemont, South Dakota; Kinder, Louisiana; Challis, Idaho; Vinita, Oklahoma; Evarts, Kentucky; La Grange, Georgia. The Larger Parish Plan is used to a great extent. This focusses the attention of ministers and workers and clients upon the duty and privilege of serving over large stretches of open country, with special attention to farmstead visitation.

While Dr. Dana's work is under the commission of the Home Missionary Society and in Missionary States, he has, on invitation from Constituent States, and in co-operation with their Secretaries, assisted in promoting a number of projects within their boundaries. Such service has been rendered in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Minnesota, and larger parishes have been started at Wadena, Minnesota; Ashland, Maine; Alstead, New Hampshire.

III. The City

"He beheld the city and wept over it."



REV. LUMAN H. ROYCE

THE cities were scarcely considered a part of home missionary work when the city was first organized. For many years the nation was largely rural. The migration to the cities became very large about 1900, and in 1910 half the population of the United States was urban. The Society, accordingly, was confronted by a new and distinct task. In 1911, Rev. Herman F. Swartz was called to the

position of Associate Secretary, and devoted the major part of his time to the development of the city work. Dr. Swartz, however, was requisitioned for other duties, and it was not until 1920 that a Director of City Work was appointed jointly by the Home Missionary, Church Building and Sunday School Extension Societies. Rev. Luman H. Royce, D.D., who had for a number of years been Superintendent of the Cleveland City Missionary Society, was elected to the position. The year following his appointment Dr. Royce visited eighteen leading cities of the country and

rendered a varied service. He advised concerning new building sites, changes of location, choice of pastors, and the erection of new buildings or enlargement of old ones, the time devoted to each place varying from three days to three months. The calls for his services have continued and, to a degree, the same program has been followed. Some outstanding achievements in city work accomplished during the past two years are the new church at Miami Beach, Florida, which has an unusually fine property; Cleveland Park Church, Washington, D. C.; the churches at Laurel and Missoula, Montana; and at Portland, Oregon. In all the cities of the country changing conditions and rapid growth are taxing the resources of the National, State and City Societies to provide adequate religious privileges. It is the aim of the Home Missionary Society to assist in establishing churches in strategic centers and in so equipping them that they shall be able to cope with the problem confronting them.

In this connection should be mentioned the privilege and responsibility of the Home Missionary Society in college and university towns. There the leaders of the future are gathering; among them are thousands of our Congregational young people and thousands of others for whom we have a message. The local church in these communities cannot be expected to undertake the task of student care unassisted. In co-operation with the Education and Church Building Societies, the Home Missionary Society seeks to give much-needed aid to such churches.

IV. Our Foreign-Speaking Work

"He hath made of one blood all the nations of men."



REV. HENRY M. BOWDEN

IN 1884 the foreign population of the country had increased to such an extent that it was felt some concentrated effort should be made toward its evangelization. The first step in this direction was the appointment of Rev. Henry M. Schauffler as Superintendent of the Slavic Department, which included the Bohemians, Poles and other allied groups.

He continued in this position until his death. About 1919

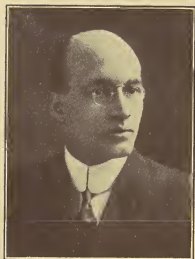
the oversight of this Department was given to Rev. O. C. Grauer. In 1884 the German Department was organized, with Rev. George E. Albrecht as Superintendent. He was succeeded by Rev. Moritz E. Eversz, who spent the greater part of a long life in the development of the Society's German work. His successor was the present incumbent, Rev. Herman Obenhaus. The Scandinavian Department came into existence in 1885, with Rev. W. N. Montgomery as Superintendent. Later a division was made in this department, the Dano-Norwegian work being passed on to

the Superintendent of the Slavic Department, and the oversight of the Swedish work given to Rev. Fridolf Risberg. Upon the death of Mr. Risberg, in 1921, Dr. Grauer assumed the care of this field in connection with the Dano-Norwegian and Slavic work. The Finnish was the last of the foreign departments to be organized. It came into existence in 1912, and the Superintendent was Rev. Karl F. Henrikson, who resigned in 1919, to take up work with a church in Toronto, Canada. Since that time the supervision of the Finnish Department has devolved upon the Director of Foreign-Speaking Work.

The growth of the immigration work was sure and steady, and in 1919 it was found necessary to have some one take the oversight of this entire branch of service which deals directly with the ten per cent. of our Congregational churches in the United States that are of foreign speech. Accordingly Rev. Henry M. Bowden was appointed the Society's Director of Foreign-Speaking Work, with headquarters in New York City. Much of his time has been given to the development of the work in the larger cities and at Ellis Island. Two years ago the Society assigned Mrs. Jennie F. Pratt to the care of the school at Ellis Island, where, with the assistance of Miss Azniv Armaghian, a native of Armenia, she looks after the children who, for various reasons, are detained at the port of entry. Here they are taught many things that are useful to them after they are admitted to the country. The value of this work, both from a religious and patriotic point of view, cannot be over-estimated.

V. The Negro Work in the North

"Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God."



REV. HAROLD M. KINGSLEY

THE migration of Negroes to the North (1915-19) brought about a religious situation that made it necessary for the Society to organize a Department of Negro Work and to appoint a Superintendent to look after it. Rev. Harold M. Kingsley was the man selected for the position. It was decided that in certain great industrial cities, such as Detroit, Chicago, and Cleveland, a church work should be

established that would attract the educated Negroes and have some chance of permanence. Mr. Kingsley first gave his undivided attention to the work at Detroit, Michigan. Here a number of migrants had been holding meetings for about a year, but there was no distinct organization and no church home. An organization was effected under Mr. Kingsley's leadership, and the membership was brought from twenty-five to 176. This church is now in possession of property valued at \$23,000, has a community program and its progress seems assured.

Mr. Kingsley next undertook the temporary pastorate of Mt. Zion Church, Cleveland, Ohio, and at the present time it is a seven-day church, having a fine recreational and community program. When the task at Cleveland is finished, the Director of Negro Work will turn his attention to other churches which are struggling toward success.

It is the aim of the Society, in co-operation with Constituent States, to establish churches of the Congregational order among colored people in the North wherever the need for them appears. Already there are about thirty-two organized churches as well as a very large number of missions. An educated ministry and an intelligent and educated membership are the goals toward which it is striving. Surely the men and the money will be forthcoming for the carrying on of this great work.

In addition to the five divisions of its activities herein set forth, the Home Missionary Society is, in a very real sense, the servant of all the churches, both missionary and self-supporting. It stands ready always to aid our common project in every possible way. By the publication of reports and special leaflets and programs, as well as by monthly articles in "The American Missionary," it seeks to aid pastors and laymen in understanding the home missionary problem and to arouse in them enthusiasm for the tremendous things waiting to be accomplished. Most of this literature is to be had for the asking. Judicious use of it and of the stereopticon lectures which are sent out free of charge will go far toward arousing missionary interest in any church.

Another of the Society's important contributions to the whole denomination consists in its financing of the Commission of Evangelism and Devotional Life which, under the direction of Secretary Frederick L. Fagley, is doing much to inspire and assist all our churches in accomplishing their fundamental duty—the enlistment of men and women and boys and girls in the service of Jesus Christ.

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